




TO: VSU Faculty

FROM: Robert T. Smith, Ph.D. 
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Professor of Mathematics

DATE: May 29, 2019

RE: **Revised Valdosta State University Faculty Workload Policy**

Below is the revised VSU Faculty Workload policy, developed over the past academic year by a faculty task force and recently approved by the Deans' Council and by President Carvajal.

PREAMBLE

A workload policy for Valdosta State University's faculty must recognize that faculty contribute to the life of the institution through their teaching, their scholarship and creative endeavors, and their service—to the university, to the community, and to their academic disciplines. All of these activities contribute to VSU's mission as a teaching-intensive institution dedicated to offering quality instruction to our students—undergraduate and graduate, in the traditional classroom and online. To provide excellence in teaching, faculty must devote effort to all these components of their professional lives.

Finding a balance among these activities is a challenging task, which is further complicated by the nature of faculty work. Faculty work does not fit into a typical five-day work week nor is it confined to the time faculty spend in direct contact with their students, either face-to-face or online. Moreover, the distribution of effort among teaching, scholarship and creative activity, and service may vary among faculty members, and individual faculty workload may vary from term-to-term or year-to-year, depending on the mission and priorities of their program, college, and the university. However, the distribution of effort should always balance the scholarly, creative, and service interests of individual faculty members with their responsibility to deliver academic programs and services of high quality.

Finally, a policy must recognize the diverse needs and expectations of our different colleges and units; therefore, a university policy should provide the basic principles on which each college or unit will build its own workload policy with guidance from faculty in all of its departments.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

As part of the University System of Georgia (USG) Valdosta State University follows the "General Policy on Academic Affairs" which states that "The Chancellor, the University System Office of Academic Affairs and the University System of Georgia (USG) presidents, their administrative

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officers and faculties shall develop, adapt, and administer the academic methods and procedures deemed by them to be most effective in promoting efficient operations and the advancement of learning.” These functions include “prescribing the teaching load to be carried by each member of the faculty” and “determining the maximum and minimum number of students permitted in a class.” In addition, this policy prescribes that “Each USG institution president and his or her administrative officers, faculty, and staff shall promote effective higher education and efficient service having in view resources available to the institution.” <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C336>.

Furthermore, as a comprehensive university in the USG, Valdosta State University’s mission is defined as follows, to “. . . offer a number of undergraduate and master’s-level programs with some doctoral programs. Typically, associate-level degrees are not offered at comprehensive universities. Graduate programs at comprehensive universities are characterized as master’s-dominant. While teaching is a core focus at all USG institutions, the emphasis on basic and applied research is heavier at comprehensive universities than state universities or state colleges, but not emphasized as heavily as research universities. It is expected that institutions within this sector will be committed to being world-class academic institutions.” <https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section2/C324>

This language from the university system is echoed in VSU’s mission statement: “As a comprehensive institution of the University System of Georgia, Valdosta State University (VSU) is a welcoming, aware, and vibrant community founded on and dedicated to serving our communities’ rich and diverse heritages. Through excellence in teaching, basic and applied research, and service, VSU provides rigorous programs and opportunities that enrich our students, our university, and our region.” <https://www.valdosta.edu/strategicplan/mission.php>

Thus, as established by the University System of Georgia and as defined in VSU’s mission statement, this policy sets the general parameters for faculty teaching load at a comprehensive university and provides guidance for colleges, units, and programs to establish clear processes and practices to determine faculty teaching load and workload within their units.

POLICY

VSU’s teaching load is as follows:

- For tenured and tenure-track academic year (fall/spring) faculty: no more than 24 credit hours, 24 contact hours, or equivalent per academic year; guidelines for maximum number of course preparations per term and maximum/minimum class sizes should correspond to program policy.¹

¹ For credit and contact hour guidelines, consult <https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/documents/credit-contact-guidelines.pdf>. Furthermore, for academic year faculty (fall/spring), summer is an additional term operating under different guidelines.

- For non-tenure track academic year (fall/spring) faculty: no more than 30 credit hours, 30 contact hours, or equivalent per academic year; guidelines for maximum number of course preparations per term and maximum/minimum class sizes should correspond to program policy.
- For tenured and tenure-track fiscal year (12 month) faculty: no more than 36 credit hours, 36 contact hours, or equivalent per year; guidelines for maximum number of course preparations per term and maximum/minimum class sizes should correspond to program policy.
- For non-tenure track fiscal year (12 month) faculty: no more than 45 credit hours or 45 contact hours or equivalent per year; guidelines for maximum number of course preparations per term and maximum/minimum class sizes should correspond to program policy.

This teaching load assumes that faculty will be able to fulfill the other expectations required in their promotion and tenure documents, their annual evaluations, or in their position descriptions. The colleges and the library, working in concert with their faculty in their various academic programs, will determine variations from this load by the procedures listed below.

PROCEDURES

All units (colleges, departments, and the library) must develop their own workload policies utilizing the following procedures:

1. Each policy should be built with the participation of all faculty members.
2. At minimum, the policies and procedures developed by a unit must require the following:
 - (a) consistent application, as far as possible, to all faculty members of the unit;
 - (b) for each faculty member, joint development (by the faculty member and department head) of an annual written professional expectation embedded in the annual evaluation that is approved by the department head, college dean, and the Provost;
 - (c) linkage of the annual workload description to the annual faculty evaluation; and
 - (d) definition of a mechanism for implementing workload modifications during the academic year as the need arises (for examples, see Appendix A)
3. The department head, under the supervision of the dean, assigns the teaching load of faculty members, taking into account program needs and available budget. Faculty members should typically be assigned the prescribed teaching load described above. In units where this teaching load does not apply clearly (such as Odum Library), the workload policy shall parallel the University Workload Policy, differing where appropriate and justified.
4. For the allotment of any reassigned time, each unit is responsible for developing and maintaining standards on what activities exceed normal expectations for teaching, scholarship/creative activity, and service. These factors must be well-defined by units and

applied consistently within a department and must be approved by the dean and the Provost (see Appendix B for further definitions).

5. Some of these responsibilities may be associated with a regular service/administrative function and the reassigned time may be calculated automatically as part of the faculty member's load with approval by the dean and the Provost. If a faculty member is requesting reassigned time that is not included in these regular expectations and/or extra funding is required to grant the reassigned time, department heads may use departmental funding as available with the approval of the dean and the Provost. If no departmental or college funding is available, requests may be sent to the university reassigned time committee for consideration of available university funding.
6. All unit workload policies must be developed, approved, and then reviewed on a regular cycle of at least once every five years by their faculties, by the unit's executive committee and dean, and by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. All policies will be posted on the unit's website and linked to the Academic Affairs website.
7. Documentation of faculty workload assignments for the upcoming academic year must be submitted to the dean in accordance with unit policy. Such documentation shall include the following:
 - a. The distribution of total workload assigned to teaching, scholarship/creative activity, and service.
 - b. An explanation for any proposed teaching assignment lower than the VSU teaching load.
 - c. The course designation and load assigned for each course to be taught.

APPENDIX A

OTHER APPLICABLE POLICIES

Faculty workload and/or teaching load may be modified for any number of reasons during the course of an academic year or a term either for personal or professional reasons. Other university-wide policies may come into play should a faculty member seek these modifications.

- **Educational and Professional Leave**

Leaves of absence of one year or less with or without pay may be granted by the institution's president and reported to the Chancellor. All leaves of absence must be entered into the appropriate HR data systems. Recommendations for extensions of one-year leaves of absence or the initial granting of leaves of more than one year, require the Chancellor's or his/her designee's approval.

https://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section4/C695

VSU's Policy and Application Form for Leave with Pay:

<https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-leave.php>

- **Faculty Overload**

Under certain circumstances, qualified teaching faculty and administrative faculty may be called upon to take on additional teaching, research, or service responsibilities at their home institution. Whenever possible in this situation, institutions should consider adjusting the individual's primary duties to incorporate the extra duties associated with the overload(s). If it is determined that a workload adjustment cannot be made, the faculty member's contract should be amended to reflect a temporary change in compensation warranted by the additional responsibilities. A contract modification should also be done when faculty are involved in joint staffing agreements that warrant additional compensation at another USG institution (see Section 5.3.3 in the Business Procedures Manual).

https://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section4/C698

- **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Any employee (including part-time and temporary) of the University System of Georgia, who has:

- been employed by the University System of Georgia for at least twelve months total (not necessarily the last twelve months), and
- worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave

...is eligible to be granted family leave for conditions authorized by the Family and Medical Leave Act.

The Act provides that employees may be granted up to twelve work weeks of job-protected leave during a 12-month period.

<https://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/fmla>

- **Grant or Contract-Funded Buy-out**

Faculty members with a funded grant to contract may buy-out teaching time if allowed by their grant or contract and approved by their department head, dean, and the Provost.

APPENDIX B

DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS

- **Teaching load responsibilities** include, but are not limited to, activities such as remaining current in the teaching field, preparing for class, evaluating student work, and being accessible and responsive to students. Additional teaching activities may include, but are not limited to, regular curriculum development, mentorship, and supervision of theses, dissertations, internships, and independent projects. *Units need to determine a consistent measure of when the level of these activities exceeds regular expectations, and faculty should be considered for reassigned time (a reduced teaching load) or additional compensation.*
- **Scholarly and creative activity** may include, but is not limited to, creative products or performances, publications, presentations, exhibitions, grant proposals/awards, professional related innovations, and other forms of scholarship. *Units need to determine a consistent measurement of when the level of these activities exceeds regular expectations, and faculty should be considered for reassigned time (a reduced teaching load) or additional compensation.*
- **Program Administrative Assignments:** Administrative assignments (e.g., head, director, coordinator) during the academic year are included in service activities. Any reduction of teaching assignments based on administrative assignments is determined by each department with the dean and Provost's approval and subject to constraints imposed by the unit policy.
- **Service responsibilities** may include, but are not limited to service to the university, college, department, profession, or community (related to one's professional expertise). *Units need to determine a consistent measure of when the level of these activities exceeds regular expectations, and faculty should be considered for reassigned time (a reduced teaching load) or additional compensation.*